<u>What is claimed is:</u>

1. A head end device for use in a hierarchical network, the device comprising a classifier connectable to a source of content and operable to place the content into at least one of a plurality of hierarchical data streams corresponding to a particular class of content.

2. A device as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the classification of content is made in accordance with its data type.

3. A device as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the classifier is connectable to a data stream of content in the form of data elements and a splitter connected to the output of the classifier wherein the classifier identifies the data type of each element of the stream and inserts a marker into said stream indicative of a priority assigned to the element such that splitter subsequently places each data element, in accordance with the marker, into a corresponding hierarchical transport stream for subsequent transmission by the network.

4. A device as claimed in Claim 2 or Claim 3, further including a connection to a look-up table accessible in use by said classifier, the table comprising a set of profiles, each of which includes at least one definition of a priority for a particular data type wherein the selection by the classifier of a particular profile for identifying the data type of each element is determined by the network.

11

5. A device as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said hierarchical data streams are ranked in accordance with a predetermined criterion.

6. A method of transmitting content in a hierarchical network comprising classifying content received for transmission and placing the content into at least one of a plurality of hierarchical data streams corresponding to the classification of the content.

7. A method as claimed in Claim 6, including defining a data stream for a particular classification.

8. A method as claimed in Claim 7, including establishing a set of profiles, each of which includes at least one definition of a data stream for a particular classification wherein the selection of a particular profile is determined by the network.

9. A method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the network determines the selection of a profile on the basis of an intended recipient of the content.

10. A method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the network determines the selection of a profile on the basis of a service providing said content.

11. A method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the network determines the selection of a profile on the basis of network load.

12. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 6 to 11, wherein said hierarchical data streams are ranked in accordance with a predetermined criterion.

13. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 7 to 10, wherein the network is a terrestrial digital video broadcast network (DVB-T).

14. A computer program comprising executable code for execution when loaded on a computer, wherein the computer is operable in accordance with said code to carry out the method according to any one of Claims 6 to 13.

15. A program as claimed in Claim 14, stored on a computer readable medium.

16. A system for delivering content over a hierarchical network, comprising a source of content deliverable, to a network, the network including head end equipment operable to place content into at least one of a plurality of selected hierarchical data streams for transmission by a transmitter, and a terminal operable to receive the data stream, wherein the head-end equipment classifies the content and in accordance with the classification places it into a corresponding hierarchical data stream.

17. A system as claimed in Claim 16, wherein the terminal provides a return channel connectable, in use, to the network, such that a request for the delivery of content may be originated by the terminal.

18. A system as claimed in Claim 16 or Claim 17, wherein said hierarchical data streams are ranked in accordance with a predetermined criteria.

19. A method of delivery content to a terminal in a network having a plurality of hierarchical data streams, the method comprising receiving a request for content, passing said request to a network gateway and subsequently receiving content identified in said request in the form of at least one content element, classifying said at least one content element, assigning a priority to said at least one content element in accordance with said classification and assigning said content element to a hierarchical data stream appropriate to said priority.

20. A method as claimed in Claim 19, wherein a user identity is identified from said request and a corresponding user profile obtained in accordance with which profile priority is assigned to said at least one content element.

21. A method as claimed in Claim 19 or Claim 20, wherein said request is received in a return channel established by a terminal of a public land mobile network via a

14

public switched telephone network and said content element is delivered over a broadband broadcast network.

22. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 19 to 21, wherein said hierarchical data streams are ranked in accordance with a predetermined criteria.

23. A computer program comprising executable code for execution when loaded on a computer, wherein the computer is operable in accordance with said code to carry out the method according to any one of Claims 19 to 22.

24. A program as claimed in Claim 23, stored on a computer readable medium.